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Feds: Asbestos causing 'substantial health threat' to Meyersville residents

PASSAIC TWP. — Two Meyersville households face an "imminent and substantial health threat" from exposure to asbestos, according to federal officials, who added that neighboring properties may face a potential hazard.

In addition, officials noted at a special

meeting with township officials Thursday that other areas in the township may have dangerously high levels of the substance, which has been linked to cancer and lung disease.

Due to public concern, the federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) may run an advertisement

alerting residents to the problem and giving a telephone number which those who know of an asbestos problem may call.

As a result of the study, the EPA has posted warnings on the two Meyersville properties, attempting to block off access there until remedial work is done this week.

The first site are stables located on White Bridge Road belonging to David Major.

Richard Salkie of the Emergency Response Program branch of the EPA said at a meeting last Thursday that the asbestos is located in a riding track on the eastern part of the property, where an asbestos material was used as fill in the early 1970's.

Because horses are constantly using the track, the asbestos has become pulverized and clouds of dust are frequently being raised when the track is used.

When asbestos particles in the air are inhaled they can cause lung cancer or ~~asbestosis, a lung disease~~. Therefore, it is important to keep the asbestos from becoming airborne, officials said.

When notified of the problem, Majors agreed to discontinue using the track. However, he and his wife, Joyce, went against the advice of the EPA's Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) and chose to stay in their home.

The EPA recommends that levels of one percent or more be corrected.

Salkie said last week that the track is five percent asbestos and added that samples taken from the vacuum cleaner in the house found a two percent level of asbestos. However, he added, this doesn't mean much, because "we don't know what was vacuumed" by the Majors.

Major noted that the EPA never took air samples and has never put anything in writing.

The other property belongs to Hans (Please see Feds on page 18.)

...But residents remain undaunted by warning

PASSAIC TWP. — Despite warnings from Federal environmental officials, residents living on two Meyersville locations where asbestos was recently found are determined to remain in their houses.

David Major, who owns horse stables on White Bridge Road where high quantities of asbestos were found, said Friday that "I myself don't have this respect for asbestos, because I've worked with it all my life" as a contractor.

Prior to that, he noted, he worked for a company that did spray-on insulation work.

Scientists have linked asbestos to cancer and lung disease.

Major said that he had notified the owners of the horses boarding at his stables of the problem but that so far no one had withdrawn their horse.

A dangerously high level of asbestos was found at a riding track on the east side of the property, according to the federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

"I have no concerns. Neither of us do," said Major's wife, Joyce.

This, despite the stern warning from the EPA.

Based on the information avail-

able, the residents at both sites face an imminent and substantial health threat from exposure to asbestos through inhalation and possibly ingestion," read the EPA report released last Thursday.

Major agreed to close the track and the EPA will cover the track with dirt to keep the asbestos from getting into the air. "I want to cooperate. I want to do the right thing for my neighbors," he said Friday.

In addition, a sample taken from the vacuum cleaner bag in the Major's household detected a two percent asbestos level.

He also noted that he and his wife spend "every weekend from March to November down at the shore."

Although the owner of the second site, Hans Tielman, a tree surgeon who lives on New Vernon Road, could not be reached for comment, his attorney, Bart Bennett, said Monday that "they will be relocating when the federal Environmental Protection Agency does the interim emergency measures on the property" within the next week.

Bennett noted that this will include paving the driveway, which has a five (Please see Asbestos on page 18.)

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